

Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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Our Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Conference

The birthplace in 1907 of the Methodist Federation for Social Service, Epworth-Euclid Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, was again the scene of Federation activities at our National Conference on May 26, 27, 28—thirty-five years later.

Dr. Worth M. Tippy and Bishop Herbert Welch, two of the five original founders of the Federation, sent greetings as did Professor Harris Franklin Rall, vice-president of the Federation almost since its inception. Dr. Harry F. Ward, one of the founders, addressed the thirty-fifth Anniversary Dinner, and Bishop Francis J. McConnell, president since 1912, gave an evening address. Winifred Chappell, who for many years was one of the Federation's secretaries, was present and spoke of her work among the sharecroppers. Charles C. Webber, for the past six years Executive and Field Secretary, gave an address and also reported on the present Federation activities. Other speakers included Rabbi Harold Goldfarb, Mrs. Bella Taylor McKnight, Professor Orville Jones, Dr. Clyde C. Miller, Dr. Ralph E. Diffendorfer, Miss Thelma Stevens, Dr. Wade C. Barclay and A. F. Whitney. A symposium was participated in by Paul Albright, Irwin Beiler, Winifred Chappell, Robert Clemmons, Benjamin C. Crawford, Armand J. Guerrero, Frank Littell and Theodore Mayer.

During the three-day conference these topics were discussed: "Religion and the World at War"; "Religion and the Post War World"; "Putting the Federation's Wartime Program for the Maintenance and Extension of Democracy into Action"; "The Role of the Federation in Combating Race Discrimination"; "The Influence of the Federation on other Protestant Social Action Groups"; "The Social Emphasis in the Work of the Boards of the Methodist Church"; "The Role of Labor in the Struggle for a Democratic World" and "The Next Thirty-five Years of the M. F. S. S."

The penetrating analyses of these subjects by the speakers precipitated keen discussions as a result of which the following resolutions were adopted:

BASIC SOCIAL CHANGE

We reaffirm our stated program for basic social change (first set forth in 1936), namely:

"1. The Christian religion compels us to reject the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society.

"2. The substitute must be the method of social-economic planning under democratic control, with social ownership of all things necessary to its successful operation, as the method by which the Christian principle of service and the development of personality can be progressively realized.

"3. This change is to be sought by education and democratic discussion, not by violence."

We call the attention of our members to the need and opportunity for emphasizing and explaining this purpose and program in the light of the conditions and evidence produced by the present world struggle.

WORLD PEACE

We urge the church to plan for the kind of peace and world organization that will prevent the recurrence of war — a peace that should make the needed economic goods of the earth accessible on essentially equal terms to all peoples of the world, and an order that would subordinate all national sovereignties to international weal and control.

METHODIST C. O. CAMPS

We reaffirm our position of freedom of conscience for all men in a democracy. We respect conscientious objectors as well as those who are serving in the armed forces.

While we deplore the virtual forced labor policy prevailing at the Civilian Public Service Camps and would look with favor on an adequate compensation for work which is really of national importance, not only at home but abroad, we recommend that the Methodist Church, through its Commission on World Peace, set up and maintain a Civilian Public Service Camp to the end that Methodist young men may feel the support of their Church as they face the consequences which follow their decision to oppose war.

WAR RELIEF

We extend to Russian War Relief, Inc., 535 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., an agency devoted exclusively to raising funds for Russian relief in the form of food, clothing and medical supplies, and to the Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., the same support we have already given to China Relief.

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EQUITABLE SUPPORT OF MINISTERS

We stand for a more equitable distribution of ministerial salaries through the inauguration in each Annual Conference of a plan that would bring help to underpaid ministers from their higher paid brothers—a plan that would be more thoroughgoing than any of the sustentation plans now operating in our Methodist Annual Conferences.

We urge the Annual Conferences to memorialize the 1944 General Conference to publish all of the sustentation plans now in use in our Church and thus make it possible for each Annual Conference Committee dealing with this subject to have information which would enable it to improve its present plan.

RACE RELATIONS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

We recommend that:

(1) Our members be vigilant in the defense of the four freedoms — “freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of religion, freedom from fear and freedom from want”.

(2) The Methodist Church endeavor to act in this country and abroad on matters affecting racial groups in harmony with its teaching of the supreme worth of personality.

(3) The Board of Education and the Board of Missions of our Church unite in planning an extensive campaign to create mutual trust and goodwill between racial groups, employing scientific procedures and such persons as anthropologists, sociologists and educators in this effort.

(4) The Board of Temperance of the Methodist Church, owner of the Methodist Building in Washington, D. C., request the Dining Room, Inc., a restaurant on the first floor of the Methodist Building, to revise its policy of discouraging the patronage of Negroes unaccompanied by white people, and to serve Negroes without discrimination.

(5) Inasmuch as many employers are not granting employment to Negroes in skilled and semi-skilled jobs, we use every influence at our command to stop this discrimination; that we request all employers who hire semi-skilled and skilled workers to engage properly qualified Negroes; and that we bring all concrete cases of known discrimination to the attention of the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, Mr. Lawrence W. Cramer, Executive Secretary, Social Security Building, Washington, D. C.

(6) Our government resettle the Japanese American citizens (the wisdom of whose removal from their homes we seriously question) upon lands and in homes comparable with those from which they were removed.

(7) The Oriental Exclusion Act be repealed.

(8) We checkmate our American brand of Fascists—Father Coughlin, Gerald Smith, Congressman Howard Smith, Martin Dies and Senator Reynolds—by factual presentations of their true character.

ORGANIZED LABOR

Labor is no longer a minority movement bargaining solely for status and recognition. Trade unionism has come of age, and, as a majority movement,

must be concerned with the broader problems of social welfare beyond wages and hours and conditions of work. The church must share with labor its social responsibility for creating the good society.

We urge members of the M. F. S. S. to take the lead in calling community Interfaith Councils of Religion and Labor for the purpose of implementing the joint concern of churchmen and labor for justice and goodwill.

We call on the Methodist Church, and its various organizations, to put into practice its Social Creed by requiring its publishing agents and other church officials who employ workers to announce that, in accordance with the established policy of the United States Government, they are willing to enter into collective bargaining relationships with their employees organized into trade unions of their own choice.

We also call on organized labor to open its ranks to all men without discrimination as to race, creed or color.

We thoroughly approve the setting up of joint labor-management committees in each plant, factory, mine or mill in the United States, and rejoice at the great progress in the development of industrial democracy that has already been achieved through the operation of these committees in industry after industry.

We commend the ever-increasing unity of purpose that is being achieved in the United States among the trade unions that are affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Federation of Labor, and the Railroad Brotherhoods, and express the hope that the time is not far off when there will be organic union among the three groups of unions.

We call on the organized trade union movements of the world, and especially upon the trade unions in the United States, England, the Soviet Union, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Canada, Mexico and other Latin American countries, to co-operate with each other and to help mankind “secure a peace which will establish for all the people freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of religion, freedom from fear and freedom from want.”

TAXES

In conformity with the ethics of Jesus and to the end that justice may more nearly prevail in the field of taxation, we recommend:

1. The adoption of the principle of taxing the people in proportion to their means.

2. Steeply graduated individual and corporation income, inheritance and gift taxes, to be paid either in currency or in kind, and providing for a 100% tax on all individual incomes above a reasonable standard of living level, and a 100% tax on all profits over and above a 6% return on invested capital.

3. High excise taxes on luxuries and further increased taxation on such non-essential items as liquor, tobacco, expensive amusements, jewelry and costly apparel.

4. Defeat of the proposed general sales tax and the repeal of all existing state sales taxes.

5. Repeal of all laws making the payment of a poll tax a prerequisite to voting.

6. Opposition to the broadening of the income tax base.

GASOLINE EFFICIENCY

We have been informed at this Conference that certain oil companies are withholding from public use improvements which would increase the efficiency per gallon of gasoline 200 to 300%.

We therefore request the authorities responsible for gasoline supply and rationing to investigate this matter and, if it be found that there do exist improvements which would increase the efficiency of gasoline, to take the necessary steps to make them available for public use.

ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE CHURCH

Committed as we are to the establishment of a society where instruments of production and institutions of control will be socially owned and administered, we are convinced that a re-working of the socio-economic policy of the church itself and its institutions is demanded. This calls for:

(a) A realignment of basic investment policy, taking the emphasis away from the implements of finance capitalism (banks, first mortgages, insurance, railroads, corporations), and developing new units of economic practice such as cooperatives, credit unions, craft centers and labor schools.

(b) A recognition of organized labor by our institutions, in maintenance, printing, and other capacities.

(c) A system of social security for maintenance employees of churches, institutions and agencies.

RADICAL CHRISTIANITY

We believe, in view of the rapid advancement of the social sciences, especially economics, anthropology, sociology and social psychology, that it is imperative that a Christian philosophy of social change include both the moral and scientific approaches to human problems.

The future of the Methodist Federation for Social Service calls for a thorough investigation of the radical Christian approach to socio-economic problems. Therefore we urge that the Federation do the following:

(a) Set up study groups to study intensively the problem of Christian social action and a Christian sociology. We request that study units be prepared, based on certain historic struggles of the Federation, reviewing materials such as the "Report on the Steel Strike", and containing basic content from books by Dr. Harry F. Ward and other M. F. S. S. leaders. We also urge that studies be prepared on the Russian Revolution and on the Indian Nationalist Congress and their significance in suggesting methodology for Christian social action.

(b) Encourage Christian laboratory groups such as Ashrams, Christian communities, work camps and fellowship farms; also, the reporting on Christian cell groups and their work in the socio-economic field.

The aim should be to re-define the function of a radical Christian minority in the church and in society. We recommend that a Project Committee be

constituted in the M. F. S. S. to implement the vitally important work of re-thinking and re-working the radical Christian approach to socio-economic problems.

A LABOR MINISTRY

It is generally agreed that organized labor constitutes one of the greatest forces for genuine democracy, and for a decent peace after the war. One of the unfortunate signs of the times is the growing separation between middle-class Protestant churches and those who work with their hands.

We feel strongly that a wise and well-planned program is necessary to meet this situation. Part of the tactic will be defined as the study and action groups develop; a large statesmanship would also call for the immediate establishment of a *labor ministry*.

We urge Annual Conferences to select men who have capacity and training for such highly important work as workers' education, labor organization, and the ministry of reconciliation between the classes and to support them as missionaries.

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

Evidence is growing that there is a definite campaign, under the cloak of the war emergency, to make the churches the servile instrument of government bureaucracy. State and local agencies, especially in bond and stamp sales, salvage campaigns, recruiting of war labor, and various preventive services, are making serious demands upon the people in the churches.

We assert that in time of war as well as in peace the international church has a unique function of healing and must avoid too close alliance with any narrow nationalistic policy. . . .

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that an effort be made by the Executive Committee to secure a nucleus of active members of the Federation in every Annual Conference of the church.

We further recommend that the members of the Federation be urged to constitute in every Annual Conference an effective organization for the spread of factual information and for social action in line with the purpose and program of the Federation—the organization to take the form of:

(1) A Conference Federation for Social Service; (2) A Committee of Correspondence and Social Action; or (3) Whatever other plan of organization the group may consider advisable and of major effectiveness for their Conference.

We also recommend that a Youth Section of the Methodist Federation for Social Service be constituted within the framework of the stated purpose and program of the Federation, allowing the Section autonomy in determining objectives and lines of action.

An effort should be made to secure from members of the Federation and other sources a special Bulletin Fund sufficient to make possible the publication of occasional Social Questions Bulletins, preferably quarterly, enlarged in size, to be sent to every pastor in the Methodist Church.

Charles Webber's Report

Charles C. Webber, Executive and Field Secretary of the M. F. S. S., reported that since the 1939 National Conference he had:

Spoken in practically every state of the Union, and in Mexico, on the necessity of putting the philosophy and program of the Federation into action.

Stressed the fact before Annual Conferences, church, college, university, labor and cooperative groups that the basic cause of war, poverty and unemployment is to be found in the operation of the capitalistic system of economy with its struggle for profits.

Pointed out that the Christian religion compels us to reject the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society, and that the substitute must be the method of social-economic planning with social ownership of all things necessary to its successful operation.

Defended the right of minority political groups to express themselves, and to have a place on the ballot; defended the rights of labor as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, the National Labor Relations Act, the Wages and Hours Act and the Walsh-Healy Act; defended the right of conscientious objectors, both religious and political, to exemption from service under military authorities.

Worked to protect the living standards and the health and housing of the people against the exactions of profiteers operating under the cloak of the program for national defense.

Supported the Anti-Lynching Bill, the abolition of the poll tax, opposition to anti-Semitism and all forms of race discrimination, aid for war refugees and China relief, and consumers and producers cooperatives.

Endeavored to persuade the Methodist Publishing House at Nashville, Tenn., to sign a collective agreement with the Allied Printing Trades of that city.

Tried to persuade the Board of Temperance of the Methodist Church to require the Dining Room, Inc., now leasing space

for a restaurant in the Methodist Building at Washington, D. C., to announce that it would serve Negroes without discrimination.

Organized M.F.S.S. Units in the Annual Conferences.

Organized Regional Conferences and the National Conference of the M.F.S.S.

Directed the National office.

Edited the Social Questions Bulletin.

Built up the mailing list of the Social Questions Bulletin from 2,332 in 1936 to 3,279 in 1942; and the total paid-up membership per year from 1,159 to 1,830.

Conducted the Thirty-fifth Anniversary financial campaign.

Worked out the Harry F. Ward itinerary through the United States and Canada.

Set up the Ward Dinner in New York City at which \$600 was raised for the Federation.

Served as a "resource person" for the Committee on the State of the Church of the 1940 General Conference of the Methodist Church, and in a similar capacity at the 1940 Northeastern Jurisdictional conference.

Organized United Christian Council for Democracy National Conferences on "The Voice of the Christian Religion Concerning the War," and "The Maintenance and Extension of Democracy."

Conducted the Religion and Labor Traveling Economic Seminar through the South in the summer of 1940, and participated in the Mexican Horizons Seminar in Mexico City.

Served as Eastern Field Representative for the American Civil Liberties Union, working in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, the salary received being paid into the Federation treasury.

Played the role of the minister in the civil liberties film, "Native Land," now appearing in a New York City theatre.

Appeared before the House of Representatives Rules Committee in opposition to the continuation of the Dies Committee.

Served on the Religious Committee to Free Earl Browder.

Served on the Religious Committee of the Russian War Relief, Inc.

Win Democracy

New York East Conference, May 18, 1942. "We must win the democracy which we now have only in spots. A nation which tolerates poll taxes to disfranchise colored and underprivileged citizens, which stands for Jim Crow defense work and the color line in the fight for freedom; has much unfinished business to be dispatched before we have full democracy. And political democracy is not enough. We must also have economic and social democracy, including an equality of educational opportunity for both sexes of all classes and races. There is no equality in educational opportunity when the children of the clergy and the children of the rich may have the very best in education while equally intelligent youth of less privileged groups are unable to study under the great teachers and to work in the great libraries and laboratories. . . .

"We must win the character without which democracy cannot be achieved and without which it cannot be permanently maintained."

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312